

The continuing work of the Gospel

Colossians 1:9-14

Main idea: All believers are in Christ, and can endure, come what may.

Introduction - It is now November, and that means the holidays with various family traditions are approaching, and our family has its traditions. Among them are classic movies. That we see together. Yes, every Thanksgiving we watch, 'It's a wonderful life', and every Christmas, 'The miracle on 34th street, typically the 1994 edition. But in addition, I always suggest watching another classic, 'The Sound of Music'. I do like musicals, and in my opinion, this is the best one. I like how it follows a true historical story, that has a happy ending. However, each year I get out voted.

In the musical, set in the late 1930's in pre-WW2 Austria, Julie Andrews is leaving her position as a Nun in an Abbey to become a nanny for a widowed German Naval Officer with 7 children. She was very apprehensive. So, on her way to this assignment, she sings a song to build her courage for the task before her. The chorus of the song is this - **'I have confidence in confidence alone, besides what you see, I have confidence in me!'**

It is obvious by her song where she found her confidence for the challenging life that was before her, it was in herself. In our passage today, Paul is praying for the young church in Colossae. This was a church that Paul had never visited, but he writes this letter, to encourage them. It appears that a man named Epaphras, mentioned in verse 7, who was probably a convert of Paul in Ephesus, brought the gospel to Colossae.

Paul records his prayer for them, and through his prayer, helps them to see that their confidence for living godly lives is found in God, not in themselves. By reminding them of who they are in Christ, and what Christ has done for them, they can approach whatever is before them in confident faith that they can live for Christ. They can trust God for grace to live their lives in a god-glorifying way, regardless of what lies ahead for them.

So, how can Paul pray for them with such confidence, when he doesn't even know them? Because, his confidence is not in the people, his confidence is in God, and his prayer reminds them of the on-going, powerful work of Christ in their lives. His prayer reminds them of the truth of what God has done in the life of the believer. As we look at Paul's prayer for the Christians in Colossae, living in the 1st century, let us realize that these truths remain sure for us in the 21st century as well, and every century in between....and to come.

In the same way, because we are in Christ, we can draw upon the same God in the same way for faithful living through whatever lies ahead for each of us.

Read the passage

*9 And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be **filled with the knowledge of his will** in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, 10 so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him: bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; 11 being **strengthened** with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy; 12 giving thanks to **the Father, who has qualified you** to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. 13 **He has delivered us** from the domain of darkness and **transferred us** to the kingdom of his beloved Son, 14 in whom **we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.***

Pray

1. All Christians responded to the same gospel

Paul prays confidently for these Colossian Christians. As Paul expresses his prayer for them it tells them, and us, where his confidence for them lies. It lies in the work of Christ in their lives, seen first in their genuine response to the gospel. Let's read verse 6 -

- ***...the gospel, 6 which has come to you, as indeed in the whole world it is bearing fruit and increasing—as it also does among you, since the day you heard it and understood the grace of God in truth***

So, since the gospel has come to Colossae, and they have genuinely responded to it, it is already bearing fruit in the lives of these young Christians. Paul's statement is astounding. He is saying in verse 6 that the gospel is bearing fruit wherever the message of Christ is shared and received, even throughout the whole world. This is not because of who they are, but because of who Christ is. Bearing the fruit of the gospel in their lives, is expressing the spiritual growth that is being seen in their lives. This 'fruit' being produced is observable. It could be seen by others as 'godly choices and godly actions' in their lives.

In the prayer of Paul for the Colossian church, we see his encouragement that the powerful work of Christ is at work in them, as it is wherever the gospel has gone. All who have responded to the good news of the gospel, are indeed, growing and becoming more like Christ. Paul reminds them of this before he begins to pray for them.

In this prayer Paul says that he has been interceding for the church since they heard that the gospel came to them. In his prayer he begins by directing them to God, by asking for God to give them an understanding of his will, so they might live their lives for God, filled with the knowledge of his will.

- ***(9) And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, (10) so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and growing in the knowledge of God;***

He is praying for them to frame their choices and decisions out of an understanding of God's will for his people. The desire is for them to walk in a manner pleasing to the Lord. Through the work of Christ in them, with a regenerated heart leading their desires, and their choices, they will bear godly fruit in their lives. In other words, bearing fruit is seen in the godly deeds in the life of the believer.

Paul is praying that this godly fruit is to extend to every good work that they find themselves involved in. Every aspect of their lives, every role or responsibility or job should be affected by the desire to live for the Christ. As they walk out their lives with a goal to please God, they will deepen or grow in their relationship with God.

But how can Paul have confidence that they can live this way?

In verses 12-14 Paul acknowledges the truth that the work of salvation is the work of God in their lives. God has secured the believer by His initiation, His work, and we see Paul expressing joy and thanksgiving for what God has done.

Our hope to live a life worthy of the Lord, for Him is based on what the Lord has already done in us, as it was for the Colossians. God brought us into this Christian walk, He has called us to it, and he will empower us for it. As Paul closes this prayer, he reminds them that their confidence in what God has done for us secures our hope in Him. Because he has called us, because we have Christ in us, we can sing - "Besides what you see, I have confidence in Christ in me." The joy is that these truths will never change.

You see Paul has confidence as he prays for them because he knows that for the Colossian believers, indeed all believers, that these truths describe the reality we live in:

1. ***With joy 12...thanks to the Father, who qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light***
 - a. God has Qualified us God has qualified us, we did not qualify ourselves.

2. (13) He has delivered us from the domain of darkness...

- a. God has Delivered us..., we did not deliver ourselves.

3. ...and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son

- a. God has transferred us...and transferred us to the Kingdom of *his* beloved Son. God has transferred us, past tense, we have not transferred ourselves.

4. (14) ...in whom (in Christ) we have redemption.

- a. God has redeemed us, we did not redeem ourselves.

5. ... the forgiveness of sins.

- a. God has forgiven us ...Because of the sacrifice of Christ on the Cross, God has forgiven us. We did not earn forgiveness ourselves.

We can see the confidence that Paul has in the sovereign work of God in the life of the Colossian believers that he reminds them of in his prayer. because of all that he has done for them, they are positioned to be recipients of all the power that they need to live lives pleasing to the Lord - *with joy, giving thanks to the Father...*

Paul also helps them to see how they can have confidence in the way God has called them to walk...

2. All Christians are strengthened with the same power

Paul refers the Christian life as a 'walk', with a request for the Colossians *"to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord."* Knowing that the Christian life is not an easy, he pens verse 11. This is a startling verse that is structured in a way that is unexpected.

- ***...being strengthened with all power...***

'Being strengthened', means that it is something that is being done *to us*, not being done by us. Here we have another departure from the chorus by Julie Andrews. This strengthening is not something that we can do to ourselves, but a strengthening that is being done to us. Something that is made possible because we are in Christ. Yes, Paul is praying that they 'walk in a manner pleasing to the Lord', but he wants us to see that our daily walk is not something that we are called to do on our own. God gives us strength to do what he calls us to do.

Also, this is in the present tense *'being strengthened'*, and this suggests that this strengthening is an on-going activity. This strengthening is also with 'all power'. There is not any lack or shortage of power for the task at hand or the life before us. The next phrase in the verse makes clear the extent or amount of this power:

- ***... according to his glorious might...***

Paul prays for them, reminding them that this power to live in a manner worthy of the Lord is not power from within them, but strength from power from being in Christ. It is according to *'his glorious might'*. Remember the power of *'his glorious might'* is divine power. Stop and think about what this is saying ...*'his glorious might'*... is the power that created the universe, that set the stars in space, that formed the mountains, that parted the Red Sea, that healed the sick and raised the dead. Remarkably, we have access to this power as believers to live godly lives, because we are in Christ.

Let the reality of what Paul is saying here sink in for a moment... this is unlimited power for our lives. Greater power than anything we have here on earth, and God makes it available for every believer. Greater power than any tool or force or atomic means, or even demonic power. This power is for godly living. The power that he affords to us is (11) *...according to His glorious might'*. This power is made available not only to the Colossians and to the Gilbertonians.

What follows this expression of the power available to us in Christ, is surprising. How would you finish that sentence? If you were strengthened, or empowered, with all power, what would you think Paul would pray that power to be for? For evangelism? For Healing the sick? For Spiritual leadership? For ministry endeavors, or for evangelist efforts, for preaching, for parenting, or for success in business. No ...

- ***...for all endurance and patience...***

Of all of the things that Paul could have prayed that we have power to accomplish, for him to say 'endurance' and 'patience' is telling. For ALL endurance and patience? Not Some but ALL. We are given this access to His power, and here it is stated for endurance and patience. But this unlimited power is given to the believer for endurance and patience, which touches every aspect of our lives with hope.

There is not part of our daily lives that does not draw on our need for endurance and patience. This prayer brings hope to wherever we are challenged.

Hope that regardless of what challenges in our Christian walk come, we have in Christ the resource to overcome, to endure. In each and every difficulty we face, if we have

confidence we can endure, we can go forward. If we realize that not only can we endure, it can be more than just 'gritting our teeth endurance'. This would describe me watching a Hallmark movie for the 89 minutes until the anticipated relational breakup happens at the 90-minute mark only to be resolved in the final 30 minutes before the 2 hours are up. Our endurance can be characterized as 'patient' endurance.

- **"Endurance"**; can be directed to God and so means to "wait on him," and signifies that kind of perseverance which enables one to hold the position already taken in battle against enemy attacks. Word Commentary

Sounds pretty amazing doesn't it? Here we are told that since we have responded to the gospel, we are now in Christ, and therefore we have access to the unlimited source of power to strengthen us with not just some, but all endurance and patience. If you are a Christian, then you can endure what is in your life and what is coming into your life. Because the power or strength to for us to endure the difficult circumstances is found in God, not in us. God's unlimited strength is provided for the believer.

Remember power, supernatural power, is the request from Paul for us to experience. Power for living each day of your normal life. Yes, simply living the normal Christian life in a world that is against God and those following God. What do we need to do this? Endurance and patience.

- **"Patience"** - "The outworking of his divine power is not in spectacular miracles but is for great endurance and patience, particularly in the face of opposition." (DA Carson)

The Colossians had their own set of 1st century challenges. We have our own need for endurance and patience. 2020 Has been a year that has already required of us much endurance - from smaller inconveniences like toilet paper shortages to larger concerns, like increasing Covid numbers, and now an election with confusing results and an uncertain after math.

As we set our hope on God, we can respond with endurance and patience. How we respond with our hope set outside of us and outside of our circumstances draws attention to where our hope lies - on the *'One God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.'*

Conclusion

Do you feel overwhelmed by the current events of 2020? Do you feel that you need a dose of confidence that regardless of the future events, you can live a faithful, god honoring life? Remember that these truths that Paul prays for the Colossians have been securing the souls of believers for over 2,000 years, and God's purposes have never been delayed by man, they will always march forward, as they will with us this year.

This hymn is a helps capture the way that God is with us in uncertain times:

- **Hymn - How firm a foundation –**

Fear not, I am with thee, O be not dismayed,
For I am thy God and will still give thee aid;
I'll strengthen and help thee, and cause thee to stand
Upheld by My righteous, omnipotent hand.

The soul that on Jesus has leaned for repose,
I will not, I will not desert to its foes;
That soul, though all hell should endeavor to shake,
I'll never, no never, no never forsake

Prayer

Benediction: Jude 1:24

***24** Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, **25** to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.*